



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Inflammation of tissue folds that surround the fingernail. The inflammation can be bacterial or fungal and is not contagious.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Bacterial paronychia:

- Pain or tenderness, redness, warmth and swelling of tissue adjacent to the fingernail.
- Central whitish area produced by pus.

Fungal paronychia:

- Redness and swelling around the fingernail.
- No pain, warmth, itching or pus.

CAUSES

- Bacterial paronychia is preceded by injury, such as a torn hangnail. The infecting bacteria is usually *Staphylococcus*.
- Fungal paronychia is caused by a fungus or yeast infection.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Injury around the fingernail.
- Occupational exposure to constant wetness (dishwashers, bartenders, housewives).
- Diabetes mellitus.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Protect hands from wetness.
- Leave hangnails alone.
- Avoid fingertip injury.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Bacterial paronychia is curable with treatment in 2 weeks.
- Fungal paronychia is chronic and may require 6 months to heal.
- Recurrence is common with both forms.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

If untreated, may permanently damage the fingernail and nail bed, and the infection may enter bone or bloodstream.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Laboratory studies, such as culture of the discharge, to identify the germ.
- For bacterial paronychia, apply warm soaks.
- If abscesses present, may require incision and drainage.
- Wear heavy-duty vinyl gloves to prevent contact with irritating substances, such as water, soap, detergent, metal scrubbing pads, scouring pads, scouring powder and other chemicals.
- Dry the insides of gloves after use. Discard gloves if they develop a hole. A glove with a hole harms the hand more than not wearing a glove.
- Wear vinyl gloves when you peel or squeeze lemons, oranges, grapefruit, tomatoes or potatoes.
- Wear leather or heavy-duty fabric gloves for housework or gardening.
- Use a dishwashing machine or ask someone else to wash dishes.
- Avoid contact with irritating chemicals, such as paint, paint thinner, turpentine, and polish for cars, floors, shoes, furniture or metal.
- Use lukewarm water and very little mild soap to shower or bathe. All soaps are irritating. Expensive soaps offer no more protection against irritation than less-expensive ones.

MEDICATIONS

- For minor pain, you may use non-prescription drugs, such as aspirin or acetaminophen.
- Antibiotics or antifungal medicine (depending on the type of infection) may be prescribed.

ACTIVITY

No restrictions.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You have symptoms of paronychia.
- Fever develops during treatment.
- Pain is not relieved by treatment.